The Faith of an English Churchman

Albert Mitchell

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THE FAITH OF AN ENGLISH CHURCHMAN

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LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK
221 EAST 20TH STREET, CHICAGO
TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON
128-132 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, TORONTO

THE FAITH OF AN ENGLISH CHURCHMAN

BY

ALBERT MITCHELL

Lord, we beseech thee to keep thy church and household continually in thy true religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of thy heavenly grace may evermore be defended by thy mighty power; through JESUS Christ our Lord.

EPIPHANY V.

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Made in Great Britain

Most of the citations from Holy Writ are in the words of the American Standard Version; but I have not hesitated on occasion to prefer another rendering.

A. M.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Fatherhood of God	3
II.	God and Sin: the Trinity	11
III.	The Incarnate Redeemer	17
IV.	The Holy Spirit	25
V.	The Divine Sovereignty	31
VI.	The Flock of God	37
VII.	The Word and Sacraments	45
VIII.	The New Birth—and Baptism	51
IX.	The Lord's Supper	61
X.	Personal Religion	73
XI.	The Ministry	81
XII.	The Mission of the Church	89
XIII.	Forgiveness—and Some Results	97
XIV.	The Unseen World	105
XV.	The Returning Lord	115

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

A

If ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear; knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver and gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers: but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory: so that your faith and hope might be in God.

1 Peter i. 17-21.

CHAPTER I

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

THE conception that God — the Supreme — is our Father is at once the simplest and the most sublime note of the Christian religion.

It was not wholly new or strange when JESUS came. The Scriptures of the older covenant contained this, as so many other features of the newer covenant, in their witness; nor did they confine the truth to the claim that God was "a Father to Israel." There is a wider triumph in the words "Thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us: thou, O Jehovah, art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name." No other of the many religions that, whether by evolution from a less religious and less sophisticated stage of human existence or by deterioration

Jer. xxxi. 9.

Is. lxiii. 16.

from an earlier primeval revelation of God to a wonderful race that He formed "after our likeness," claimed to lighten the sons of men on their puzzling pilgrimage of life, or in the dark hour of death, ever succeeded in reaching this standard; and no religion that, since Christ came, has been conceived in the reflected light of His revelation or by the perverse mind of man has ever chanced upon a nobler or more uplifting note.

Gen. i. 26.

Yet in the newer covenant "the God and Father of our Lord JESUS Christ" has revealed His Nature and Character in far fuller fashion. But still the first note of recognition, as He who spake as "never man so spake" taught us, is the "Our Father."

1 Peter i. 3.

John vii. 46.

This fact is final and conclusive, and should disperse all that to-day hides the truth of God's will and purpose from us. "Beloved, now are we God's little children." May we not believe that, as a true father delights in the baby struggles of his little one to expression and performance; watching as the little mind

1 John iii. 2.

grapples with big things; and patiently appreciates the little mistakes; and understands and sympathises with the little naughtinesses; and waits and waits with just such guiding interference as is absolutely necessary and no more (if the little mind and will are to be exercised and built up), looking ahead to the fuller growth and perception: so God—our Father—looks at and deals with His "little children," though they think themselves wonderful full-developed beings, in His perfect understanding and sympathy? "God loves His children the more because they are real; because they need Him." Cf. T. R. Glover

The fact that God is our Father is the clue that leads us not only through the perplexities of life, but also through the perplexities of thought and of theology. It delivers us from unworthy ideas of God and from foolish and cruel theories of His ways. It is also a light upon the unknown realms of the future, upon life beyond death, upon the destinies of ourselves and those we love better than ourselves: and so the hard

and terrible imaginings that have crept into Christendom because of the ancient and ever-recurring compromise between true Christianity and Paganism, and because men have persisted and still persist in interpreting the words of God and His messengers by thoughts that are alien to His nature and revealed purpose in Christ, are brushed aside by the fact of the Fatherhood of God.

So also when we speak of the love of God, of the righteousness of God, and also (as we must) of the wrath of God; all our thoughts and words must be shaped and guided by this dominating fact that He is Father. His love is neither a soft amiability nor a cold charity: but the discriminating yet fervent love that a true father bears to his little ones. His righteousness is neither a stern unbending theoretical rectitude nor an accommodating appraisement of results: but a perfect unwavering ideal of right-being and right-doing. His wrath is neither impulsive or vindictive reaction against that which crosses His Will, nor an impassive state of

enmity against disloyalty and rebellion: but a pure and holy irreconcilability with evil and everything that is vile and unworthy. So, therefore, neither His love, nor His righteousness, nor His wrath can possibly be quiescent or wait for something external to intervene. His love must be known in action: His righteousness must work itself out in creative power: His wrath must consume all that is evil. But in all things and in all ways the love is a Father's love, the righteousness a Father's righteousness, and the wrath a Father's wrath. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame"—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"—the "righteousness of God" . . . "is revealed" in "the gospel"—"the wrath of God is revealed . . . against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness."

Ps. ciii. 13.

John iii. 16.

Rom. i. 17.

Ibid. 18.

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."

Matt. vi. 8.

God and Father, great and holy
  Fearing naught, we come to Thee ;
Fearing naught, though weak and lowly,
  For thy love hath made us free ;
By the blue sky bending o'er us,
  By the green earth's flowery zone,
Teach us, Lord, the angel chorus,
  Thou art love, and love alone.

W. Farrar.

GOD AND SIN: THE TRINITY

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us Thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech Thee, that thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest, one God, world without end.

CHAPTER II

GOD AND SIN: THE TRINITY

THE outstanding need of man in relation to God is deliverance from evil: forgiveness of sin: salvation: security. It is the second note of the Christian religion that our Father, knowing this need, has made effective provision for it. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In all other religions man is seeking salvation. But the wonder of the religion of God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures of the older and newer covenants is that God is bringing salvation. This is the Gospel—God's Spell—God's News: not merely Good News. Now it is in this "Gospel" that we advance another step in our understanding of the nature and

1 John i. 8, 9.

Cf. Ps. cvi. 4.
Titus ii. 11.

1 John iv. 9. character of God. "Herein was the love of God manifested in us that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him . . . sent his Son to be the propitiation for our
Ibid. 10. sins . . . the Father hath sent the Son to
Ibid. 14. be the Saviour of the world." Therefore "whosoever shall confess that JESUS is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he
Ibid. 15. in God."

In facing the problem of *Sin*—the existence of that which is irreconcilable with the character of God, a contradiction of His righteousness which incurs His wrath, and is totally irremediable by human power or effort, and so urgently calls for God's direct intervention—we learn that God is not a lonely monad but a Unity. And as
Heb. ix. 14. we are taught that it was "through the eternal Spirit" that Christ (the Son whom
Ibid. i. 2. God had "appointed heir of all things") "offered himself without blemish unto God" in order to make "purification for
Ibid. i. 3. sins," we learn that this Unity is a Tri-unity. The Trinity is revealed to us in the action of the Godhead in bringing salvation. The

Divine Name, into which the new-created race—redeemed at so great a price—is to be incorporated, is the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matt. xxviii. 19.

As the revelation of God in Christ protects us from confusion of the actions within the Godhead—from "confounding the Persons," in the old teachers' phrase—so the revelation of God in the Spirit safeguards us from the opposite error of dividing the essential being of God.

Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And Thee, of both, to be but One :
That, through the ages all along,
This may be our endless song :
Praise to Thy Eternal Merit,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

THE INCARNATE REDEEMER

We beseech Thee, O Lord, pour Thy grace into our hearts; that, as we have known the incarnation of Thy Son JESUS *Christ by the message of an angel, so by His cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of His resurrection; through the same* JESUS *Christ our Lord.*

CHAPTER III

THE INCARNATE REDEEMER

CHRISTIANITY is Christ. Not the teaching of Christ: but Christ Himself. He is the Word of God. That phrase includes, as one of our most profound theologians has shown, as well the Greek conception of the Reason of God as the more Semitic conception of the Utterance of God. God hath "spoken unto us in a Son . . . the effulgence of his glory and the express of his substance . . . upholding all things by the word of his power." Heb. i. 3.

This Son, co-eternal with the Father, is revealed in time and space, "Christ JESUS, who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, Phil. ii. 5–11.

becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave him the name that is above every name; that in the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that JESUS Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Incarnation and the Atonement are, in the Scriptures of the newer covenant, so intimately associated that no man may separate them. It would seem to be idle to speculate whether the Incarnation would have taken place even if there had been no necessity for an Atonement for sin: inasmuch as we have no ground for imagining that in the infinite foreknowledge of God such a condition ever subsisted. In the picturesque language of "him who saw the Apocalypse" the names of the redeemed were "written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain."

Apoc. xiii. 8.

The Lord JESUS Christ was God and Man. As God the Son, of one Substance with the

Father, He was able to die in our place, instead of us, as our Substitute, so that we might go free; and inasmuch as that, in the wonderful Unity of the Godhead, meant that God Himself was bearing the penalty of sin instead of exacting it from Man, therefore it is that God "is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But He was also the Son of Man, born of a pure maiden, without the intervention of a human father, and without entail of sin: so that, as the sinless Head of the race, He was able to be its Representative, and to offer Himself in the name of all men. So every man may be said to have died in the person of his representative. Therefore, "if any man be in Christ there is a new creation."

1 John i. 9.

2 Cor. v. 17.

This, then, is God's Spell, the Gospel. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses"—"Christ . . . his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes

Ibid. 19.

1 Peter ii. 24.

Eph. i. 17. ye were healed." "In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgive-
Rom. iv. 25. ness of our trespasses." "JESUS our Lord . . . who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification."

The Cross of our Lord JESUS Christ is at once the only adequate appraisement of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; the revelation of the love of the Father who "gave his only begotten Son" to "put away sin
Heb. ix. 26. by the sacrifice of himself"; and the explanation of the marvellous self-humiliation of the eternal Son of God, who for us men and for our salvation came down from
Consec. Prayer. Heaven. He "made there (by his one oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

The Father's wisdom willed it so;
The Son's obedience knew no No;
  Both wills were in one stature:
And as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made flesh indeed,
  And took on him our nature.

What comfort by Him we do win,
Who made Himself the price of sin
To make us heirs of glory !

. . . . . .

Can man forget the story ?

Ben Jonson.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God, who of old time didst teach the hearts of Thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of Thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His Holy Comfort; through the merits of Christ JESUS *our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end.*

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY SPIRIT

DURING the present age the Holy Spirit is the Vice-gerent on earth of the Divine Majesty. As the Son—"JESUS Christ the righteous"—is the Paraclete (Advocate) of men with God: so the "Spirit of JESUS"—"the Spirit of him that raised up JESUS from the dead"—is the Paraclete of God with men. He comes with strength—hence the old English "Comforter"—in our need, our bereavement, during the age in which "the heaven must receive (JESUS) until the times of restoration of all things." There is a wonderful reticence in the Scriptures as to the Holy Spirit except on the subject of His work. But the idea of fellowship, communion, intercommunion, whether it be the fellowship within the Godhead, mysterious and wonderful: the fellowship of God with

Acts xvi. 6.

Rom. viii. 11.

Acts iii. 21.

man, gracious and merciful: or the fellowship of the "blessed company of all faithful people"—of those who are "in Christ"—is associated with Him. It is He Who indwells us,[1] making us partakers of the Divine Nature: builds us together for or into "an habitation of God in the Spirit." It was He who brought all things to the remembrance of the chosen few, whatsoever their Teacher had said unto them; and so produced for our comfort and edification the sacred narratives of the life and doings and sayings of the Lord JESUS; and His authority and aid are claimed by apostolic writers for the teaching that they deliver and enforce. At every point of the Divine work, in creation, in redemption, in the growth of the Kingdom of God, He is evident. Wherever He is there is a twofold vision, of sin and of the Saviour: elsewhere stated as "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Where that vision is absent, the presence of the Spirit cannot be claimed. His coming is inti-

Liturgy Anglic.

2 Peter i. 4.

Eph. ii. 22.

John xiv. 26.

John xvi. 8.

[1] Westcott—"He abideth beside us" in the Church, and He is "in" each believer.

mately associated with the glorification and triumph of the Incarnate, Crucified, Risen, and Ascended Lord. "This JESUS . . . being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear." Acts ii. 32–33.

"The dispensation of the Spirit is the revelation of Christ." His fellowship stands with the Father's love and the grace of the Incarnate Son in the most familiar and tender of all benedictions. Westcott. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
  Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
  And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
  Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
  To do and to endure.

Edwin Hatch.

THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round
Of circling planets singing on their way;
Guide of the nations from the night profound
Into the glory of the perfect day;
Rule in our hearts that we may ever be
Guided and strengthened and upheld by Thee.

J. W. Chadwick.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

THE tender love of the Father; the abiding grace of "God manifest in the flesh"; and the intimacy of "the Lord the Spirit" relate with the fact and doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty. While Professor Kautsch maintains that the title of "the Lord of Hosts" was originally reminiscent of the conception of a war God, the God of the armies of Israel, he confesses that the ultimate sense attached to the title was that of the Ruler of the Universe. Hastings' *Dict. Bible* (Ext.).

Language fails to express the Majesty of God. "He counteth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names": Ps. cxlvii. 4. He "hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." Nahum i. 3. He "is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable: whom 1 Tim. vi. 15.

no man hath seen, nor can see." But the very Majesty of God, incomparable and immeasurable, is not shrouded in remote aloofness, but is the ground of His approach to man and the measure of the dignity of manhood so honoured. "His understanding is infinite"; and He "upholdeth the meek." He "is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that take refuge in him." He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy": yet "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Ps. cxlvii. 6.

Nahum i. 7.

Is. lvii. 15.

The fact of the Divine Sovereignty is, therefore, not lost in the vastness of the universe that God has created, and inhabits and rules. It is brought into intimate relation to man. It implies a personal foreknowledge that is pre-omniscient as well as an all-rule that is ultimately (whatever limitations or deferments His patience may interpose) omnipotent and all-prevailing. It is difficult for human thought to reach

conceptions that suffer from being expressed in phrases and still more from translation. But at least we are taught that, without any impairment of moral responsibility or human personality, those who are to do Him service during the present age of His providence are the subjects of His intimate and individual choice—chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world"—"elect . . . unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of JESUS Christ"—"foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son." And we are also taught that, dimly as we may apprehend the implications of the words, in the long last "God (shall) be all in all." God knows and sees the end before the beginning.

Eph. i. 4.
1 Peter i. 2.
Rom. viii. 29.
1 Cor. xv. 28.

Thy kingdom come! on bended knee
  The passing ages pray;
And faithful souls have yearned to see
  On earth that kingdom's day.

But the slow watches of the night
  Not less to God belong;
And for the everlasting right
  The silent stars are strong.

F. L. Hosmer.

THE FLOCK OF GOD

Forward, flock of JESUS,
Salt of all the earth,
Till each yearning purpose
Spring to glorious birth ;
Sick, they ask for healing,
Blind, they grope for day ;
Pour upon the nations
Wisdom's loving ray.
Forward, out of error,
Leave behind the night ;
Forward through the darkness,
Forward into light.

Henry Alford.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLOCK OF GOD

THOSE with whom God deigns to come into intimate personal relationship through the sacrifice of the Son are "the flock of God"; that "little flock" to whom it is their Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom: the "one flock" that shall ultimately be compacted when the Good Shepherd shall have brought those "other sheep" of His who are not of the covenanted "fold." In the Scriptures of the newer covenant the transition is not abrupt to the conception of "the Church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood"; for the sheep of the flock are those who hear the voice of the "great Shepherd of the sheep," and the Church — *Ecclesia* — is the company of "the called." As the "little flock" of a pastoral community adapted itself to the life of the

1 Peter v. 2.
Luke xii. 32.
John x. 16.
Acts xx. 28.
Heb. xiii. 20.

city, the name used for the common public assembly displaced the simpler countryside phraseology. But the primary relationship is that of the member of the flock to its shepherd: the member of the Church to its head. The unity of the flock is known by its adhesion to the one Shepherd: the unity of the Church is in its vital union with its Head. From this the minor consequence of the inter-relationship of members of the flock, the Church, results. By one Spirit we are baptized into one body: one, "even as" the Godhead is one—the daring thought is our Lord's. In our English liturgy this wonderful fellowship broadens out into "the blessed company of all faithful people," but even then the true sequence is preserved; we first come into personal individual relationship with God and then experience incorporation in the mystical body of His Son. Early the fellowship was spoken of as a Church; One, because the vision of God, in which it subsists, is untrammelled by limitations of time or space; Holy, because composed of those who are individually indwelt by the Holy

1 Cor. xii. 13.
John xvii. 22.

Spirit; Catholic, because "throughout the whole world,"[1] and not limited by race or nation; and Apostolic, because inspired by and witnessing in and to the form of sound words received from the first messengers of the Risen Lord, and recorded in the Apostolic Scriptures.

It is the Church of God: the Body of Christ: it is directly controlled by the Spirit. And in its response to the directions of the Spirit it acts as a whole: there is not in the earliest days any clean-cut line between the ideal and the actual, the universal and the local, the whole and its components.

But historically the point of sight is gradually shifted from God to man: the fellowship is seen rather as "the congregation of Christ's flock"; its unity is obscured, its holiness marred, its catholicity impaired, and its apostolic witness dimmed. We have to seek for signs by which to recognise it. For the English Church they

Bapt. Order.

[1] The words of the "Te Deum," "The Holy Church throughout all the world," are a literal translation of "Holy Catholic Church."

Art. XIX.

are indicated to us: "The (the article is not emphatic) visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." The definition cannot certainly be pressed to an intentional distinction between a Visible and an Invisible Church, nor to an assertion that there is only one concrete Visible Church. But the Church remains the community itself, "a congregation"; it is subject to and not in control of the Word and Sacraments: and it is under stern obligation to keep the Word "pure"; and to minister the Sacraments "duly." The Word and Sacraments validate the Church: not the Church the Word and Sacraments. And as the Giver of the Word and the Source of the Sacraments is the Lord, we are quietly led back to a truer attitude. The Church as visible is a congregation of believing students of the Word and obedient recipients of the God-given symbols; although thereby it also becomes, as a com-

munity, a witness and keeper of Holy Writ and a dispenser of the Sacraments.

Mid toil, and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest. S. J. Stone.

THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour JESUS *Christ.*

CHAPTER VII

THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS

THE Word and Sacraments are not to be separated. Primarily the Word of God is the Son through whom He made the worlds, in whom all things consist, and in whom He hath spoken at the end of the days of His revelation. But the name passes to the writings in which the living utterance of God is recorded; and we learn to speak of the Bible—the Scriptures of the older and newer covenants—as God's Word written. The Sacraments are the Word in action, in picture, portrayed to the eye.

The Bible is the authentic record of God's revelation. The Scriptures are God-breathed: the Spirit is the Breath of God. But we must remember that the method of the Spirit is not that of dictation, but rather of the Teacher guiding the intelligence of His pupils. We rightly have recourse to all

2 Tim. iii. 16.

John iii. 8.

the resources of sane and reverent scholarship and skill in elucidation of the Scriptures, their authorship, their environment, their literary structure. But at all times we remember the Divine purpose and authority that are manifest throughout. God never relieves us of the obligation to use the common sense that He has given us; but He does intervene in His own concern when we are honestly at our wit's end. We may not lightly invoke the Divine name to settle matters that do not directly affect His revelation of His purpose and will: but the Bible is not a dead literature and cannot with impunity be treated as such. "The Word of God is living (alive), and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." It is "the sword of the Spirit"; and the Spirit who has watched over the revelation and its

Heb. iv. 12, 13.

Eph. vi. 17.

record and its preservation will never fail us in its due interpretation: "only may we hearken sitting at his feet." The Holy Scriptures are the authority to the Church: the Church in every part is bound by the appeal to the Scriptures.

The Sacraments—our English Church, always careful in its affirmations and chary of negations, recognises two Sacraments "ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel," and frames its definitions to cover the "two only, as generally necessary to salvation"—are the Word in action, pictured representations of the vital facts of the Gospel. The initiatory Sacrament of Baptism, of incorporation into the Divine Name with all that that involves, portrays the cleansing from sin, "the washing of water with the word," the identification with Christ in His death—"buried therefore with him through baptism into death"—and the consequent identification with Him in His resurrection. While in the second great Sacrament, of Fellowship, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim—preach—the Lord's death till he come":

Catechism.

Eph. v. 26.

Rom. vi. 4.

1 Cor. xi. 26.

No Gospel like this feast
Spread for Thy Church by Thee !
Nor prophet nor evangelist
Preach the glad news so free.

E. Rundle-Charles.

So then the two Sacraments are illustrations of the Word of the Gospel—the Gospel in picture.

THE NEW BIRTH—AND BAPTISM

D

Creator, Spirit, come and bless us ;
Let Thy love and fear possess us ;
With Thy graces meek and lowly
Purify our spirits wholly.
Paraclete the name Thou bearest,
Gift of God, the choicest, dearest,
Love and fire and fountain living,
Spiritual unction giving,
Shower Thy benedictions seven
From Thy majesty in heaven.

William Croswell.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW BIRTH—AND BAPTISM

THE purpose and method of the Gospel is not the renovation of that which is old or corrupt: but a new Creation: a new gift of life: not the mere amendment of an old life. "Except one be born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God." This new birth comes only by Divine power, "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Further, it is conditioned by the death and resurrection of JESUS Christ. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life." God "begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of JESUS Christ from the dead."

John iii. 3.

Ibid. 5.

Ibid. 14.

1 Peter i. 3.

The symbol of life is water. It is the symbol of the Word: "Whosoever shall

John iv. 13, 14.

drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." It is also
John vii. 38. the symbol of the Spirit: "He that believeth on me . . . from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit." So the new birth —the new creation of life—is attributed instrumentally both to the Word and the
1 Peter i. 3. Spirit: "Begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth":
Titus iii. 5. "He saved us, through the washing (laver) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." The source of this new life is God
John i. 13. alone; "Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of
John i. 12. God." It is given to us by Christ:[1] "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God." The reception is by believing, "even to them that believe on his name." The old English word "beleve" (the iota has crept in by error) is from the same root as the word

[1] Even repentance is a gift from Him. Acts v. 31.

"love": so "to believe" is to cast oneself upon the object of belief, here the Incarnate Redeemer, in that wholehearted devotion and self-surrender that we understand as love. "Faith," the term also used, is simply the English form of the old Roman word for trust, fidelity, or pledge of sincerity: so the ideas are akin, or even identical. The same meaning lies behind the words used in the Greek Scriptures. The new life is a complete breach with the past: "We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died": "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation" (or "he belongs to a new natural order").

2 Cor. v. 14.
Ibid. 17.

E. A. Burroughs.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are." Now are we children of God, "and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

1 John iii. 1, 2.

Of this new birth, new creation, Baptism is the Sacrament. Even though many of the

references in the Scriptures to water in relation to the new birth do not primarily concern with its sacramental use, yet the command of our Lord is peremptory: "baptizing them" (*i.e.* those who have been made disciples) "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Matt. xxviii. 19.

We have already seen that Baptism is the picture of our redemption through the death of Christ: "buried with him in baptism": "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS Christ unto the remission of your sins": "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." "Water, which also after a true likeness (or, in the antitype) doth now save you, even baptism, not the getting rid of the uncleanness of the flesh, but the enquiry of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of JESUS Christ."

Rom. vi. 4.
Acts ii. 38.
Acts xxii. 16.
1 Peter iii. 21.

Bapt. Order.

"Baptism doth represent unto us our profession; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him; that, as he died, and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness."

It is indisputable in Christian experience that the symbol—"signum, . . . quod nobis datur"[1]—does sometimes accompany the very spiritual act of regeneration—"the death unto sin and new birth unto righteousness" whereby we are "made the children of grace" (*i.e.* God's goodwill): albeit that normally the spiritual reality may follow or precede the "outward and visible sign." And our English Church dares to use the word "regenerate" in the most intimate relation with the symbol, even though it may often be true sacramentally only. (The door is jealously guarded by the insistence upon the requisite conditions: "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.")

Catechism.

Ibid.

"The Spirit breathes where he wills, and thou hearest his voice, but knowest not whence he comes or whither he goes: so is everyone that is begotten of the Spirit." The new birth is not necessarily a conscious

John iii. 8.

[1] Latin version of Catechism (1670). It is the outward and visible sign "which is given to us."

experience. Its results may be manifest to others before it is made sensibly evident to the one who has "the root of the matter in him."

Should little children be baptized, although there is neither direction nor prohibition in the Scriptures, and most of the references to baptism are phrased so as to suggest that, in those early days, it was thought of as a conscious experience? Surely. "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the Kingdom of God" . . . "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." It is indisputable in Christian experience that quite young children can, and do, receive the spiritual reality of the new birth, by the goodwill of the Spirit of God. Why should they be denied the outward sign and pledge even by anticipation? There is at least as much authority (by analogy with circumcision and Jewish baptism of proselytes) for as against the reception into the congregation of Christ's flock of His little ones.

Luke xviii. 16, 17.

Our English Church places in close association with the initiatory Sacrament of Baptism the ordinance of Confirmation. Herein the baptized one ratifies and confirms the baptismal transaction and the community by its chief minister attests the great thing there symbolised, and admits the baptized one to the fuller fellowship of the congregation of Christ's flock, beseeching upon him (her) the fullest endowment of Divine goodwill. Churchfolk have loved to trace their cherished rite back to that "laying on of the apostles' hands" through which the Holy Spirit was on occasion given to some in the results of whose baptism there appeared some incompleteness: but the ordinance is not of universal acceptance in Christendom. It is the reasonable discipline of our own Church: we do not, wisely, say more.

Acts viii. 18.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
  Till I am wholly Thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
  Glows with Thy fire divine.

Edwin Hatch.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

"Lift up your hearts!" We lift them,
Lord, to Thee;
Here at Thy feet none other may we see:
"Lift up your hearts!" E'en so, with
one accord,
We lift them up, we lift them to the Lord.

H. Montagu Butler.

CHAPTER IX

THE LORD'S SUPPER

FROM time immemorial the fuller fellowship of "the congregation of Christ's flock" has centred in the second of the "two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel." This is called in the Scriptures "the breaking of bread," and later "the Lord's Supper." It is also referred to as "the cup of blessing which we bless" and "the bread which we break." In the most detailed reference to it in the Scriptures we are told "the Lord JESUS in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For

Acts ii. 42.
Ibid. xx. 7.
1 Cor. xi. 20.
Ibid. x. 16.
1 Cor. xi. 23 *seq.*

as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." In what may be an earlier record the words of remembrance are omitted; and the reference to the cup is, in more Hebraic phrase, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," and another writer adds "unto remission of sins." The authoritative exposition given to us by our own Church is, "To the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour JESUS Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which, by his precious bloodshedding he hath obtained to us, he hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of his love, and for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort."

Mark xiv. 24.

Matt. xxvi. 28.

Order of Communion.

"The Supper of the Lord . . . is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death." Like the other Sacrament it is the Gospel in picture. What is its relation to the great central act of "our Redemption," the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross—"Who made there (by his one oblation of himself

Art. XXVIII.

once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world?" It is not a repetition of the sacrifice—that is excluded by the words immediately quoted—not a re-presentation, nor even a pleading, or impetration,—"For by one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" and has "sat down on the right hand of God." But it is a triumphant proclamation of the complete and finally effectual sacrifice, provided by the Father's foresight and love, effected by the Son's concurring self-oblation, and completed through the eternal Spirit. It includes the re-echo by the congregation of Christ's flock of the Redeemer's own "It is finished": the glorious affirmation, to the comfort and assurance of the assembled faithful and the confirmation of their witness to those outside that "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." "Ye preach the Lord's death till he come."

Heb. x. 14.

John xix. 20.

Heb. x. 17, 18.

1 Cor. xi. 26.

But we not only proclaim the perfection

of the one sacrifice for sins once offered. Our spiritual life is maintained only by the same sacrifice by which it had its beginning: and the Sacrament includes that teaching in its symbolism. "To such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ." The outward part or sign which we receive by the Lord's command is Bread and Wine: the inward part or thing signified is "the Body and Blood of Christ which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." The gift is "only after an heavenly and spiritual manner" and "the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is Faith." No minister can "give" the Body: only the Lord Himself can do that: but He does give it where the contact of faith is made: and the "outward part or sign" helps our faith to understand. But "the wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their

Art. XXVIII.

Catechism.

Art. XXVIII.

teeth the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ."

"The true eating and drinking of the said body and blood of Christ is with a constant and lively faith to believe that Christ gave his body and shed his blood upon the cross for us, and that he doth so join and incorporate himself to us that he is our head, and we his members and flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones having him dwelling in us and we in him. And herein standeth the whole effect and strength of this sacrament."

Cranmer, *Lord's Supper*, p. 43.

So far the action of the Sacrament, as distinct from the preceding and accompanying prayers and praises, is manward. The Godward response of faith is expressed by the old name "Eucharist"—Thanksgiving. In origin the name arose only from the participle "having given thanks—having blessed God" in the narrative of institution; but the idea has grown into the responsive acknowledgment by the congregation of the triumphant proclamation of God's completed victory over sin and death and of the

reverent reception of the pledges of His love. "We most heartily thank" Him. The act of thanksgiving becomes sacrificial—it is "our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving," and it passes beyond words to an enthusiastic devotion of "ourselves, our souls and bodies" in "bounden duty and service." Alternately it rejoices in the fact that we are assured by the sacramental action of our incorporation in the mystical body of His Son, "which is the blessed company of all faithful people"—words which may have inspired those quoted above from Cranmer—and are "heirs through hope" of His "everlasting kingdom." Our "Eucharist" culminates in such an ascription of all glory to God, more particularly to God in Christ, the triumphant Lamb seated on the throne, "most high in the glory of God the Father," as necessarily negatives any division of the substance of the Godhead by the conception of a presentation or pleading by us of the Atonement of the Son before the Father.

There is no room in the scriptural narratives for any thought of a change of substance in the bread and wine: for no

later "Sacrament" can be greater than that in the Upper Room. This is the inner meaning of the clever lines, of doubtful authorship, current in the later sixteenth century (or early seventeenth):

> Christ was the Word that spake it,
> He took the bread and brake it:
> And what that Word did make it,
> That I believe and take it.

What Christ made the bread in the Upper Room, that—no more and no less—it is to us to-day.

Neither is there ground, in the scriptural narrative (nor, it is submitted, in the words of our formularies), for any conception of a presence localised in or under the form of the bread and wine, of the actual body and blood of the Redeemer (whether conceived of as separated in death or as existing in His glorified humanity now inseparable from His divinity): for Him "the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things": and "the Most High dwelleth not in that which is made with hands." Acts iii. 27. *Ibid.* vii. 48.

Such a conception is wholly forgetful of the Ascension—that strangely neglected doctrine—and robs the flock of God of the fullness of Christ's teaching. "It is expedient for you that I go away," "JESUS Christ is ascended into heaven, and . . . he is there corporally, that is to say, in flesh, in body, and in soul, after such sort that he neither is nor can, after the same mean and fashion, be here beneath on earth with us. . . . We have no need that Christ should come from heaven to us, but that we should ascend unto him, lifting up our hearts through a lively faith on high unto the right hand of the Father, where Christ sitteth, from whence we wait for our redemption; and we must not seek for Christ in these bodily elements."

John xvi. 7.

Hooper, *Later Writings*, pp. 36, 49.

The term "Real Presence" (although used by some modern teachers with mystical explanations not known to the controversies of the sixteenth century) is to be deprecated; as historically, and popularly, it conveys teaching foreign to Holy Writ. The Divine Presence in this Sacrament is entirely spiritual; and, by spiritual presence, we do

not mean a presence after the manner of a spirit, but a presence of and in the Holy Spirit —*opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt.*[1]

Almighty Father, who didst give Thy Son,
A willing sacrifice on Calvary's tree;
For that great boon which our redemption won
Unending thanks and praise be paid to Thee:
While He whose offering hath for sin atoned,
Now sits a King at Thy right hand enthroned.

And while we praise Thee, and our Saviour's grace,
We keep in constant mind His wondrous love,
And, till that day when we shall see His face,
Rapt, in His advent, to Thy courts above,
By those blest signs on which He laid His hands,
We show and preach the tidings in all lands.

[1] *I.e.* the whole Trinity acts in all matters external to the Godhead—literally, "the works of the Trinity towards externals are undivided."

O Lord of mercy, hear our humble quest,
As these Thy hallowed gifts of bread and wine
According to Thy blessed Son's behest
We eat and drink at this Thy board Divine,
And grant that we, who claim the children's food,
May share His broken body and His blood.

Ah, how unworthy we of all Thy care,
Who feast alone, while those for whom He died
Still grope in darkness, far from hope and prayer,
Nor lay their sins on Him the Crucified !
Lord, break our hearts, whose heart for us did bleed,
And make Thy people one in truth and deed !

PERSONAL RELIGION

Faithful and just art Thou,
Forgiving all :
Low at Thy piercèd feet,
Saviour, I fall :
Oh let the cleansing blood,
Blood of the Lamb of God,
Pass o'er my soul.

Horatius Bonar.

CHAPTER X

PERSONAL RELIGION

THE immediate goal of religion is a personal relationship between the individual believer and God Most High. This is the true foundation of that life of the flock of God, the Church, or mystical Body of Christ, through which witness is borne to the world. This is not to say but that for many the devotional order of the Church may be and is a school wherein to learn true religion. But in exact sequence personal religion precedes the manifestation of religion in Church life.

Personal religion begins when the individual Christian—a repentant and forgiven sinner—stands upon his feet and looks straight into the face of Almighty God— Ezek. ii. 1.
the face of JESUS Christ. The ground of personal religion lies in the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction

made upon the Cross by the Incarnate Redeemer once and for all: in the new birth—the sonship—that He gives to "as many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name." The effect of this belief on the Name of JESUS Christ: this reception of Him: this individual appropriation of the forgiveness of sins and the new life which He has wrought: incorporation or identification with Him in His death and resurrection: is spoken of as "justification"—a being made righteous. "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour JESUS Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." And the result of this justification, which comes to us from God "in the beloved," is peace with God, and a condition of fellowship with Him. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord JESUS Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace (*i.e.* God's goodwill) wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

John i. 12.

Art. XI.

Eph. i. 6.

Rom. v. 1.

At peace with God! How great the blessing
In fellowship with Him to be, R. Slater.
And from all stains of sin set free,
How rich am I such wealth possessing.
My soul has found a resting place,
And I am now, through heavenly grace,
At peace with God.

There are two strands in personal religion: the mystical, intimate relationship of the soul with the Divine, and the disciplined, ordered life of love when "we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight." (1 John iii. 22.) The two strands are inseparable, and both are the gift of Divine goodwill. "That life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) "My little children abide in him." (1 John ii. 28.) . . . "He that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us." (*Ibid.* iii. 24.) The method of personal religion—that by which it is maintained—is not separable from its root and ground, the

Cross of our Lord JESUS Christ. The Spirit works only where Christ is glorified. All along the road of life we must walk in the shadow of the Cross of Christ. . . . "The blood of JESUS his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

1 John i. 7.

Personal religion must express itself in prayer. Some speak slightingly of prayer as spiritual mendicancy. We need not shrink from the implication. We come to God as beggars—for that which we need, and He alone can give us. "We love, because he first loved us." We pray, if we really pray, because we want something, and because we really care. "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." Fellowship and friendship with God are results of prayer; but they are not allowable definitions of prayer. Prayer is speaking with God: and sooner or later the truly justified believer must speak with God in his own words.

1 John iv. 19.

Ps. lxv. 2.

Personal religion is fed and nurtured upon the Word of God. It is true that to the mystical spirit the revelation of God comes at times in the intimate communion with God in the Spirit:

Speak to Him thou for he hears, and Spirit
with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer
than hands and feet. Tennyson.

But the normal and simple indication of God's purpose is to be sought in that authentic record of His revelation to man in the God-breathed Scriptures: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope." Rom. xv. 4.

And the method of personal religion includes "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ and of the benefits which we receive thereby" in "the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ." "The evidential value of the Holy Eucharist," as an old divine phrased it, is great; and not least so in the life of personal devotion.

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour Divine:

Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away,
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

E. Ray Palmer.

THE MINISTRY

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord, which he purchased with his own blood.

Acts xx. 28.

CHAPTER XI

THE MINISTRY

BUT although religion must be personal and individual, it cannot without grievous loss and disaster be solitary. The congregation of Christ's flock expresses itself in common prayer and worship and work. That involves recognised leadership. "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of public preaching, or ministering the Sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called, and sent to execute the same." The life of the Church is made effective in ordered discipline: and the public witness of the Church in the work of evangelisation (although the intimate concern of every member of the flock) is concentrated in the Christian ministry.

Art. XXIII, but see next section.

There is no doctrine of the Christian ministry that may "be required of any

Art. VI.

man, that it should be believed as an Article of Faith," inasmuch as the references in the Scriptures are fragmentary and more or less indeterminate. All that our English Church commits us to is that "those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard."

Matt. x. 6.

The missions by the Lord of the Twelve (to the lost sheep of the House of Israel) and the Seventy (with a wider commission) stand by themselves. The Seventy were re-merged in the community: the Twelve survived as witnesses of His resurrection. The great post-resurrection commission was to the nascent community as represented in the Upper Room. Passing by the case of Matthias, the first selection of Christian ministers is of the Seven (traditionally identified with the diaconate) chosen by "the whole multitude" and brought before "the apostles" for formal blessing. In the only recorded scriptural instance of choice of presbyters the Greek word used denotes

Luke x. 8.

Acts i. 22.

Luke xxiv. 33, 36.
John xx. 9.

Acts vi. 5, 6.

election, without any reference to other form. Episcopos and presbyter are in the Acts and Epistles convertible terms. But before the end of the second century (perhaps much earlier in certain regions) the three orders are apparently distinct and the ordinary (but not invariable) rule is episcopal ordination. The most striking variation is at Alexandria, where until well on in the fourth century the twelve presbyters chose and consecrated one of their number to be bishop, and then filled up the gap. But elsewhere presbyters might sometimes ordain with written permission of the bishop. The evolution of the episcopal office was slower in some parts than in others, and the mode of appointment varied. All we can say is that the ministry evolved from the needs of the community, and from the lower to the higher, and gradually approximated to a norm. Our Prayer Book attributes it to the "Divine providence" —*i.e.* (probably) as manifest in history: and the moderate statement in the introduction to the Ordinal that the three orders of our own Church are "from the apostles' time"

Acts xiv. 23; Swete, *D.B.* iii.

—which does not claim exclusiveness—is historically justified. Bishop J. B. Lightfoot writes:

Essay on Christian Ministry.

"The Kingdom of Christ . . . has no sacerdotal system. It interposes no sacrificial tribe or class between God and man, by whose intervention alone God is reconciled and man forgiven. Each individual member holds personal communion with the Divine Head. To Him immediately he is responsible, and from Him directly he obtains pardon and draws strength."

And he considers that the "divergence from primitive truth" . . . "in the encroachment of the sacerdotal" view of the ministry was due to Gentile (*i.e.* Pagan) influence. It is enough that the ministers of the Church, like the community in which they minister and of which they form an important part, are under obligation to continue "in the apostles' teaching and fellowship." This, indeed, is the true Apostolic Succession, which must be sought in the community rather than in its office-bearers; although

Acts ii. 42.

a due succession in office is of no little value in gauging the continuity of the community. Their function is to "set forth (God's) true and lively word, and rightly and duly (to) administer (His) holy Sacraments." It is hard to imagine a greater privilege or a more solemn responsibility.

Give tongues of fire, and hearts of love,
To preach the reconciling word;
Give power and unction from above,
Whene'er the joyful sound is heard. Jas. Montgomery.

[NOTE 1.] The restriction of ministration of sacraments to presbyters may have been of slow growth. The New Testament is silent. In the fourth century deacons, at times, still ministered the Eucharist, both in West and East, but the practice was condemned at Arles in 314 and at Nicæa in 325. But during the Black Death it was expressly permitted in the West of England in 1348. Small straws, perhaps, but enough to show that these matters are points of discipline and not of doctrine. Richard Baxter was ordained deacon only.

[NOTE 2.] Literature: Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*; Harnack, *Constitution and Law of the Church*; Streeter, *The Primitive Church*; and, in "Hastings," Swete, iii. 85; Gwatkin, iii. 631; also in *Camb. Med. History*, Turner, i. 143 *seq.*; and Coulton, *Black Death*.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts i. 8.

CHAPTER XII

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

THE purpose for which the Church stands is that it may make disciples of all nations—preach the Gospel to the whole creation. This is the great post-resurrection commission given by the Risen Lord to the Christian community, assembled or represented (as we may collate the various narratives) in the Upper Room at Jerusalem (and apparently repeated in Galilee). It is rather differently recorded by the various evangelists. Matthew and Mark concentrate attention on the more external aspect, the teaching and preaching and baptism; Luke and John—especially the latter—centre on the inner spiritual result, the remission or forgiveness of sins; while Mark and John, in differing form, add an impressive warning as to the calamitous result of unfaith, which primarily deepens the

Mark xvi. 16.
Luke xxiv. 33, 36.
John xx. 19.
Cf. Matt. xxviii. 19 (Galilee).

responsibility of those charged with the commission. Matthew records the promise of the abiding presence of the Ascending Lord, without which the task would be impossible; and John picturesquely interprets this as a presence of, in, and by the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God proceeding from the Father through the Son. But all show the commission to be to the community as such rather than to individuals as such. The community may, subsequently, seem to limit the fullest discharge of the awful commission to the official ministry that it comes to deem necessary to its expression: but the initial responsibility was and is laid upon the community; and "every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry," shares it; and all references to the work of ministering (as in Article XXIII) must be interpreted in the light of this fact. When our Articles were compiled, the true proportion of the work of evangelisation, whether at home or abroad, was not appreciated. It is this work that more than aught else is hindered by disunity and disruption in the Church. Our

Lord's Prayer, before His passion, was: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me." The object of the unity of the one flock is its effective use by God in this paramount work of evangelisation—the work of the Gospel. So it is that man's self-will has retarded the purpose of God.

John xvii. 20.

The missionary enthusiasm of the Apostolic Age soon slackened: as the early purity of faith, in close individual touch with the guiding Spirit, dulled as it came in contact with the world and the vainglory of life. While there are noble chapters of missionary enterprise—some to the credit of men of doubtful orthodoxy, as the Nestorian efforts to the East and the Arian missions to the Gothic and Slavic races—in the main the petrified Eastern Church ceased to be missionary, partly because of the scourge of Islam, but still more because of that corruption of faith and life which

largely contributed to the rise of Islam—a corruption that remains to bar the way to full reunion of Christendom. The Western Church has a nobler record: but here also the same corruption, and later the cruelty of the Inquisition, and the horrors of the wars of religion, left a legacy of chaos in which all the energies of faith seemed to be limited to struggle for existence or expended in intolerance.

But with the revival of spiritual religion in the eighteenth century, primarily in England but felt beyond its boundaries, came a rediscovery of the hope of the Gospel.

It seems strange to us to-day that the Christian community should ever have forgotten its duty to those outside its borders. If God has sent a message to men, every man has a right to hear it.

But it is still true that spiritual work requires spiritual men—and also spiritual methods. The real progress of the missionary task is dependent upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The impulse to-day, despite the subsidiary

interest and spur of a world call, must still be "the voice of JESUS calling."

Some are hoping and praying that in this same revival of missionary life and zeal the way may open to the healing of the broken unity of the congregation of Christ's flock—a renewed vision of the one flock of God. It can only be by closer, personal, vital union with the one Shepherd. "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." "Except one be born anew he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

John xvii. 23.

Ibid. iii. 3.

Thy kingdom come, O God,
  Thy rule, O Christ, begin:
Break with Thine iron rod
  The tyranny of sin.

* * * *

O'er heathen lands afar
  Thick darkness broodeth yet:
Arise, O morning star,
  Arise, and never set.

L. Hensley.

FORGIVENESS—AND SOME RESULTS

True forgiveness involves two things, a perfect knowledge of the offence, and a perfect restoration of love. In this sense we believe in the forgiveness of sins. "That which is impossible with men is possible with God." God knows, as men cannot know, the nature of sin; and still he offers himself to us. What that knowledge is, what that love is, is shadowed out for us in the fact that he sent his only Son to be the Saviour of the world: he sent his Son to die that we might live.

Brooke Foss Westcott.

CHAPTER XIII

FORGIVENESS—AND SOME RESULTS

BUT here we may well recapitulate, and restate "God's Spell," unalterably the same, in its inexhaustible wonder, for men and women of every race and nation and language, without distinction of rank or person.

The forgiveness of sins that God gives to us in Christ, the Son of His love, is a spiritual miracle, and not a judicial transaction; and it is perfect and complete, without afterthought or drawback. He takes away the guilt of sin, cancels the penalty, and neutralises the consequences. Some years since a preacher, in a historic pulpit, almost passionately declared that Christ's death availed only to remove the guilt of sin; the consequences must be lived out to the uttermost, and no true man would wish to avoid the punishment of his sins.

That teaching was, and is, of diabolical inspiration; and it is to be spurned as the very temptation of the Evil One. There is a sense in which it is true, as sometimes put, that not even God can undo the past. But He can, and does, do a much greater thing He makes a new beginning—a new creation. "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation." Because of the perfect obedience of His dear Son, "unto death, yea the death of the cross," He forgives us, cancels the past, and sets our feet on a new path of life, with our faces towards the light of His glory: and, as we go along that path, always in the shadow of the Cross, day by day and step by step, "the blood of JESUS his Son cleanses—is cleansing—us from all sin." This is the message, the symbolism, the pledge of the "most comfortable Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ."

1 John i. 7.

'Tis Thy wounds my healing give;
To Thy Cross I look and live.

* * * *

Day by day with strength supplied
Through the life of Him who died. W. D. Maclagan

This forgiveness is realised in a personal relation between God in Christ and man, as the repentant and broken-hearted sinner puts his hands into the pierced hands of the Saviour, in simple belief and acceptance of His word, "JESUS, Master, take me, save me, here, to-day." The privilege, great and high, of the minister of the Word and Sacraments is to effect an "introduction" of the sinner to the Saviour, "the Apostle and Heb. iii. 1. High Priest of our confession . . . JESUS." The privilege is given also, in God's providence, to others of His liege servants as they are in the way of His commandments.

The new path on which God sets us is a path of sacrifice and of service. We are chosen "unto obedience"—saved to serve. The way of God does not follow the line of least resistance. The obligation of obedience includes the law of God. The elder law is not abrogated: it is fulfilled and made explicit in the newer covenant. The Sermon on the Mount is our Lord's authoritative

Matt. v. 17, 21, *seq.*

exposition of the older covenant—except in so far as it was to be fulfilled in His own work—His life and His death and triumph—which He proceeded to unveil when He had dispersed and anticipated the misconceptions of His own day and earlier and later times, including our own days, as to the ancient revelation of His Father's will and purpose. "Till heaven and earth pass away one accent or one point of punctuation shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." It is idle to say that the law as explained by Christ cannot be carried out in practice. It cannot without God's grace: but that grace is available. God's law must govern personal and family life, and social and national relations. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world."

Matt. vii. 12.

John xiii. 35.

Ibid. xvii. 18.

Matt. v. 13, 14.

Sink not in spirit: who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher much than he that means a
tree.
A grain of glory mixt with humbleness
Cures both a fever and lethargickness. Geo. Herbert.

THE UNSEEN WORLD

He must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

CHAPTER XIV

THE UNSEEN WORLD

THE reproach of "other worldliness" once levied at the followers of the Christ is less often heard now than aforetime. There is an altered attitude in our days towards the unseen world. This may be due in part to the terrible and widespread experiences of the Great War: but still more to the amazing triumphs of science. In the face of the wonders of research and knowledge, and the interpretation—sometimes, it is true, only tentative—of long-hidden secrets of what we call the natural world, it is no longer possible for educated men and women to insist upon an impassable delimitation between the seen and the unseen, or to assert the independence of the things of time and sense, as distinguished from those of the eternal or spiritual sphere. But it may well be that a new danger lies in

wider conceptions. We need to discipline our emotions and imaginations by the Word of God—"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. . . . None of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand."

Dan. xii. 4, 10.

Apoc. i. 18.

"The keys of death and of Hades"—the unseen world—are in the hands of "the first and the last and the living one" who is "alive for evermore." He does not entrust those keys to any mortal man or woman, of whatever office or condition. That disposes for all time of any fear that the spirits of those who depart this life in His faith and fear can be disquieted or disturbed by necromancy. From whatever source may come those alleged communications from beyond the veil that hangs between the seen and the unseen that now and again agitate nervous souls, they cannot come from those "that are fallen asleep in Christ."

1 Cor. xv. 18.

Our Lord taught us that salvation is present, here and now. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

John v. 24.

It follows that, as our Church teaches, "the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord" "do live" with God, and that with Him "the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity"; and we know that "if we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep will God through JESUS bring with him." Petitions, therefore, expressly limited to "the faithful departed" are open to the stricture that they appear to throw doubt upon the love and power of God and the faithfulness of His promises. If the faithful departed are "with Christ"—"in joy and felicity"—what more can we ask for them by way of petition? The note of our English liturgy, as of Holy Writ, is of joy and triumph. We "bless His holy name" for them, beseeching Him "to give us grace so to follow their good example, that with them we may be partakers of (His) heavenly Kingdom."

1 Thess. iv. 14.

The true conception of our relationship with those true and undoubted members of the flock of God who have passed into the

unseen before us is one of fellowship "in Christ."

> Come, let us join our friends above
> That have attained the prize,
> And on the eagle wings of love
> To joy celestial rise.
>
> * * * *
>
> One family we dwell in Him,
> One Church above, beneath,
> Though now divided by the stream,
> The narrow stream of death.

Chas. Wesley.

There is no room for the suggestion that "in Christ" they lack anything that our petitions could secure for them.

In point of fact the mediæval note of gloom and apprehension, which coloured all references to the unseen world, was an echo of the adulterated presentment of the Gospel that so unhappily characterised those days in which access to the Word of God was limited and even obstructed. "There was no widely spread vision." Theologically the mediæval period was one of retrogression and arrested development. Theology re-

1 Sam. iii. 1.

vived with the rediscovery of the Greek Testament.

To-day the theory of the finality of the condition of faith or unfaith at the moment of physical dissolution and the consequent fixity of destiny of those who are not ordinarily included amongst "the faithful departed" is challenged on all hands. The Christian conscience is not satisfied with an interpretation of the more figurative language of the Scriptures that rests largely upon the use (and literal construction) of the old English word "everlasting" as a translation of the Greek word that would more accurately be translated "æternal," and is thought to suggest a timeless condition rather than duration; and, indeed, is in places almost equivalent to "spiritual." There is an appeal made to the whole scriptural conception of the character of God as revealed in Christ, which, it is claimed, is grievously compromised by the traditional view. Certainly the words used by our Lord are sometimes pressed beyond their clear meaning. He speaks of a "pruning," a "correction" (for that is the

primary meaning of "kolasis"), that is "æonian"—in the realm, on the stage, of "æternity," *i.e.* in the spiritual sphere. We may not wisely be dogmatic beyond what God has revealed; and we must cautiously discriminate between the few clear and explicit statements of Holy Writ and the many deductions and inferences and speculations of devout minds. At the least we know that Christ "went" . . . "in the spirit" . . . "and preached to the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah"—a mystic statement that is obviously linked up with the later phrase that "unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." This shows that there is no necessarily final barrier between the seen and the unseen. We learn too that "the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God"; and that in the day (if any phrase of time be

1 Peter iii. 19.

Ibid. iv. 6.

Rom. viii. 21.

allowable) when "the last enemy that shall be abolished is death" it shall come to pass "that God may be all in all." Obviously our thoughts mount into regions which our minds cannot traverse because they are inadequately equipped; and we are driven to rest in the knowledge that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all"; and "God is love." "To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

1 Cor. xv. 26, 28.

1 John i. 5.
Ibid. iv. 7, 16.
Ibid. iii. 8.

We must not forget that a veil still hangs between what God has revealed in the Scriptures as to the events and happenings that shall immediately, or mediately, follow the close of the present dispensation of His providence; and the subsequent "life of the age to come." There may be much yet to be done for Him by the royal priesthood that He has foreknown and chosen in this present age. Neither must we forget that, in what God has revealed, questions of character are much more emphasised than are some of the subsidiary matters that occupy finite minds. We may be sure that in God's most holy sight no pure thought

Cf. Apoc. xxii. 3.

or motive or unselfish deed will ever be passed by or fail of true fruition. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him." Our Father will do right because it *is* right. We may trust both His patience and His love. But we may not allow our emotions to carry us beyond the limits that God has set to our present knowledge of the future and the unseen.

Ps. ciii. 13.

Though the world in flames should perish,
  Sun and stars in ruin fall,
Trust in Thee our hearts would cherish,
  Thou to us be all in all:
Yea, though heavens Thy Name are praising,
  Seraphs hymn no sweeter tone
Than the song our hearts are raising,
  Thou art love, and love alone.

F. W. Farrar.

THE RETURNING LORD

H

Once more He comes in robes of light,
The clouds asunder rending,
With trumpet blast and splendour bright,
Angelic choirs attending ;
Then those who here obeyed His voice
Shall share His triumph and rejoice
With Him in bliss eternal.

Mary Edghill

CHAPTER XV

THE RETURNING LORD

"YE men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this JESUS, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven." Acts i. 2.

"Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." Heb. ix. 28.

"Our commonwealth is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord JESUS Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our low estate, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory." Phil. iii. 20.

"I will come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 3.

"As often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye preach the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26.

. . . .

1 John ii. 28. "And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him in his presence."

. . . .

Acts xvii. 31. God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

. . . .

Rev. xxi. 5. "And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."

When we speak of the Return of the Lord, our thoughts turn to three things, not necessarily in sequence:

(1) *The Parousia, the Presence, being at*
James v. 7. *hand, and hence "the Coming" of the Lord in Person.* He who, at the Ascension, ceased, by a definite historical act, to be present in the earthly sphere, in His proper Person, will, "in like manner," by a definite historical act, again become present in this earthly sphere in His proper Person, and

will thereafter remain so present, at least until some further happening in the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. The Lord JESUS Christ is coming. He is on His way. He is at hand. And He comes as King.

(2) *The Day of the Lord.* "The day," says St. Paul, "when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." In the artistic foreshortening of view in both Creeds and Advent Collect this is looked upon as the immediate purpose of the Advent. But we are not to think of this "day of the Lord" as a calendar or almanac day. That is not the usage of Holy Scripture. In the second chapter of Genesis the phrase "the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven" is used to cover the whole extended period of the happenings recorded in the first chapter, and perhaps also the period intervening between their completion and the narrative of the second chapter—in other words, the acts and processes of the six days of Creation as well as God's rest of the seventh day. The events of the day of the Lord may,

Rom. ii. 16.

1 Thess. v. 2.

Gen. ii. 4.

equally with "the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven," call for a period of extended duration. Time is not, with God. It is in this very connection that we are significantly reminded that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." We may not press the phrase too far. But when the Lord has come as King, He shall thereafter sit as Judge, and there is nothing that shall escape His discriminating and compassionate judgment, however long His session may require to be in the patience and long-suffering of God's eternal purpose. We are not, however, to conceive of the processes of judgment in any of the terms of legal assize.

2 Peter iii. 8.

(3) *The Resurrection of the Flesh and the Life of the World to come.* "And so," says St. Paul, "shall we ever be with the Lord," and later, "He must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." If one thing is clear, it is that to the New Testament writers the Second Coming of the Lord was a beginning and not an end. It would appear that some part of this prevail-

1 Thess. iv. 17.

1 Cor. xv. 25.

ing Sovereignty of our Lord JESUS Christ will fall to be realised upon the earth in which it has so long been challenged, but it will not be exhausted there or thereafter. The Resurrection of the Flesh, for which we look, is an immeasurably greater thing than the shadowy Immortality of the Soul. It includes the full re-instatement of the character and personality.

O quickly come; for round Thy throne
No eye is blind, no night is known. L. Tuttiett.

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